THE MALAWI NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD

2024 JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

GEOGRAPHY (J073)

General Comments on:

A. (i) Quality of the paper

The 2024 Geography Junior Certificate Examination paper was fair and comparable to those of the previous years. The paper had no typographical errors. Diagrams presented, were relevant and tables had relevant information.The vocabulary used was appropriate for candidates in junior secondary school.

(ii) Syllabus coverage

The 2024 Geography paper sampled the syllabus adequately. All the five core elements and their topics were assessed. The questions were drawn from the success criteria of the syllabus which made the paper valid and comparable.

(iii) Skills demonstrated

The 2024 Geography paper had questions that assessed candidate's mastery of content in all the ranges of cognitive skills. The questions required candidates not only to recall and show understanding of concepts but also show and perform high order tasks such as analysing information, applying knowledge to solve given problems.

In terms of geographical skills the candidates had to demonstrate acquisition of map reading skills, understanding the structure of the earth, systems and processes that shape the Earths planet and knowledge of distribution of human activities, population issues and analysis of environmental practices.

B. Performance of Candidates

Performance of candidates in the paper was average as most candidates managed to get half of the questions correct. The performance varied between schools as most of the candidates from national secondary schools and grant aided and established private schools performed exceptionally well. Most of the Candidates from district secondary schools, conventional day secondary schools and urban community day secondary did well too. However most ODL candidates and candidates from rural community day secondary schools and developing private schools performed poorly.

Poor performance was across all the sections. For example in Section A, some candidates failed to choose correct options from a set of answers that were already provided. In Section B most candidates failed to articulate geographical responses to the questions given. In section C very few candidates answered the essay questions convincingly which led to average performance.

A number of factors have been attributed to such average performance. These range from lack of qualified Geography teachers to handle the subject in some private and rural community day secondary schools. In addition to that most teachers failed to complete the syllabus as stipulated by the curriculum. This was demonstrated by candidate's failure to attempt questions which were drawn from topics which are at the end of syllabus.Lack of map reading skills was clearly demonstrated with candidates' failure to perform simple tasks such as finding four figure grid references and showing direction of features.

C. Candidates' performance on individual questions

Section A (Multiple Choice)

Question 1

The question required candidates to identify among the given options, a component of a map that provides details of features shown on a given map. Most of the candidates chose **A (key)** which was the correct option and got the question correct.

Question 2
Based on an illustration showing a drainage pattern, the question expected candidates to identify the drainage pattern shown among thegiven options. Most of the candidates failed to choose the correct option **B** (**radial pattern)** which made performance on the question to be poor.

Question 3
The question was based on an illustration of a drainage pattern. Candidates were expected to choose a factor which influences the formation of the drainage pattern illustrated, among the given options. Most candidates failed to choose **A** (**presence of crater)** as the correct option leading to poor performance.

Question 4
The question demanded candidates to choose the correct order of the first four planets in the solar system among the given options. Most candidates identified the correct order of option **D (Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars)**

Question 5
Candidates were expected to choose among the given longitudes, the location of the International Date Line. Few candidates managed to choose **C** (**180**°) the correct answer. This made performance on the question to be poor.

Question 6
Candidates were expected to choose the type of a lake which is formed when water collects on a mouth of a volcano which is blown off among the given options. Most candidates failed to choose **C** (**Caldera lakes)** as the correct answer. This led to poor performance.

Question 7
Candidates were expected to choose among the given minerals the dominant mineral in the crust. Most candidates chose the correct answer **B** (**Silica)**.

Question 8
In this question candidates were expected to choose among the given options the correct percentage of Nitrogen gas in the atmosphere. Few candidates chose the correct option **A** (**78%)** and got the question correct.

Question 9

In this question candidates were expected to choose among the given options seasons which are experienced in Malawi. Few candidates chose the correct option **D** (**warm wet and cool dry)**, leading to poor performance on the question.

Question 10

The question demanded candidates to choose the name of lines which join places with equal amount of cloud cover among the given options. Most candidates chose **C** (**isonephs)**, and got the question correct.

Question 11

In this question candidates were expected to choose among the given options a condition when air is said to be saturated. Most candidates failed to choose **D (when the wet bulb and the dry bulb thermometers show the same temperature readings)** which was the correct response and got the question wrong.

Question12

The question required candidates to choose examples of climatic disasters among the given natural disasters. Most of the candidates chose **D** (**cyclones and floods)** which was the correct answer and got the question correct.

Question 13

The question required candidates to choose among the given options, the stages in disaster risk management cycle. Most candidates failed to choose the correct response **A**(**readiness and response)** and performed poorly.

Question 14

The question demanded candidates to choose a human activity which endangers forests in Malawi among the given options. The correct answer was **D**(**uncontrolled tree cutting)** and candidates who chose the option got the question correct.

Question 15

The question required candidates to choose among the given options a challenge which affects the use of hydro-electricity in Malawi. Most candidates chose **D** (**frequent power blackouts)** which was the correct option.

Question 16

In this question candidates were expected to choose a common way of processing fish in Malawi. Performance on the question was good as most candidates chose the correct option **A** (**sun drying)**.

Question 17

The question required candidates to choose the population density for a country with a population of 85,000,000 and a total area of 100,000Km^2. Most candidates failed to identify the correct response **B** (**850pp/km^2**). As such performance on the question was poor.

Question 18

In this question candidates were expected to choose a negative impact of high population density on the physical environment among the given options. Few candidates managed to chose **land degradation (C)** as the correct answer and these got the question correct.

Question 19

The question required candidates to choose among the given options a strategy that would help Malawi to achieve a positive balance of trade. The correct answer was **C** (**producing high quality exports)** and the few candidates who chose this response got the question correct.

Question 20

In this question candidates were expected to isolate challenges faced by the communication industry in Malawi among the given options. The correct response was **D (shortage of skilled manpower and vandalism of service facilities)**. Performance on the question was good as most candidates chose the correct response.

Section B (Free response - Short Answer)

Question 21

The question was based on the map extract of Salima which candidates were expected to refer to when answering the questions.

Question 21a (i)

In this question candidates were demanded to give the four figure grid reference for Kundadza village on the map. Most candidates gave the correct eastings and northings **(5436).** Few candidates gave incorrect digits which made them fail the question.

Question 21a (ii)

The question required candidates to give the six-figure grid reference for the borehole BH432 on the map. Most of the candidates gave the correct response **(543686).** However some candidates were presenting their responses with northing digits first instead of easting digit. This made them to fail the question.

Question 21b

In this question candidates were expected to measurethe bearing of BH433 from BH103. Most candidates gave inaccurate bearing which made them to fail the question. Others gave responses which showed that their angles were calculated in an anticlockwise direction for example **212**° instead of clockwise direction. Few candidates got the correct answer by presenting **(90^{o} + 58^{o} = 148^{o})** as the response.

Question 21c

The question required candidates to calculatethe actual distance of D149 road as shown on the map. Most candidates found the question challenging as reflected by the incorrect calculations for example **2km, 5km** among others. Few candidates got the correct distance **(3.5 Km = 4 Km).**

Question 21d

The question demanded candidates to calculate the contour interval of the map. Most of the candidates got the question correct by presenting **(50m).**Those that failed gave the wrong contour interval.

Question 21e

In this question candidates were expected to describe any two economic activities practiced by people who live in the area captured on the map in relation to the features shown. Most of the candidates managed to state the activities such as farming, trade, and fishing but had difficulties in describing the activities which made them lose marks.

Question 21f

The question required candidates to calculate the area covered by the forest captured on the map and present the answer to the nearest km².Most candidates failed the question because they failed to trace the correct number of partially filled grids. Others lacked the skill of calculating area of an irregular feature. The correct calculation was as follows:

Area of the forest
= number of full squares + (number of partially filled squares/2)
= 3 + (11/2)
= 3 + 5.5
=8.5 X 1km X 1km
= 8.5 km^2
= 9km^2

Question 22a(i)
In this question candidates were expected to name the boundary between the crust and the mantle. Most candidates got the question correct by mentioning **(Moho discontinuity)** as the response**.** Few candidates failed the question by naming it the Gutenberg discontinuity.

Question 22a(ii)
The question demanded candidates to state any two characteristics of the core of the Earth's crust. Most candidates performed poorly because their responses were off for example it has soil, it is round among others. Responses such as **temperature is high** and that **it is rich in iron** were expected.

Question 22b
The question required candidates to give any two examples of geological disasters. Most candidateswho attempted the question gave correct responses **(earth quakes, landslides, earth tremors).** Those who failed it gave responses that were either biological or climatic disasters.

Question 22c
In this question candidates had a task of defining the term environmental management. Most candidates failed the question because they were defining the term "environment" rather than environmental management which refers to **processes that are put in place to conserve the environment**.

Question 22d

Candidates were asked to describe any two environmental management practices in Malawi which are related to legislative provisions. Most candidates did not do well on the question because they cited responses such as afforestation and reafforestation which are general environmental management practices. Those who brought responses such as issuing of environmental protection orders and conducting environmental impact assessment which are legislative procedures got full marks.

Question 23a

Candidates were required to mention any two minerals that are extracted in Malawi. Most candidates attempted the question and gave correct responses**(coal, uranium).** Few candidates did not attempt the question.

Question 23b

The question demanded candidates to explain any two ways in which minerals are economically important. The question was popular and the candidates who attempted got the question correct.**(Raw minerals are sold to generate revenue. Uranium is used to generate energy).**

Question 23c(i)

In this question candidates were expected to explain any one effect of natural disasters on agriculture and trade. Most candidates found the question challenging as they failed to narrate how natural disasters like floods destroy crops and drought lead to drying of crops thereby affecting agriculture. They also failed explain the how floods destroy roads and natural resources thereby affecting trade.

Question 24a

In this question candidates were expected to mention any two Malawi's endangered wildlife species. The question was fair to the candidates and performance was good. The correct response were **elephants** and **black rhinos**.

Question 24b

The question required candidates to explain two human activities which lead to degradation of wildlife habitat in Malawi. Most candidates got the question correct by explaining that pollution, and soil degradation destroy wildlife habitats. Those that failed left the question unanswered.

Question 24c

In this question candidates were expected to describe any two types of industries. Most candidates attempted the question but performance on the question was not good. This was the case because most candidates mentioned the types of industries but failed describe them. Some of the expected responses were primary industries which extract natural resources and convert them into usable raw materials and secondary industries which produce finished goods from raw materials.

Section C (Free response- Essays)

Question 25a

In this question candidates were expected to explain any four factors that lead to high population density in an area. Performance in the question was good as candidates brought in responses such as availability of fertile soils, employment opportunities, availability of social services and favourable climate among others. Candidates who did not do well on the question had challenges in explaining their responses.

Question 25b

The question required candidates to explain any three communication problems which are faced in Malawi. The question was very challenging to most candidates. Responses such as theft and vandalism of communication infrastructure, high cost of installing and maintaining communication services and low literacy levels were expected. However most candidates did not attempt the question which showed that they lacked content on the concept.

Question 26a

In this question candidates were expected to describe any four ways in which Shire River is economically important. Performance on the question was good. Candidates brought expected responses such as promoting tourism, providing venues for transport, fishing and hydro electricity generation. Candidates who performed poorly failed to provide descriptions in their responses.

Question 26b

Candidates were required to explain any three challenges faced by socio-economic activities along Shire River. The question required a candidate to have knowledge on the economic activities along the river and relate the challenges to these activities. Expected responses include description of the following siltation of the river, pollution and floods etc. candidates who explained these responses did well. However most candidates gave responses that were off key leading to poor performance.

D. Recommendations to:

(i) Schools

Schools should

- assign qualified teachers to teach geography.
- ensure that there is adequate coverage of the syllabus.
- ensure that teachers use geographical terms when teaching geographical concepts.
- make sure that teachers useapproved text books and consult multiple sources when preparing lessons.
- encourage teachers to give learners practical work especially on map reading.
- grant learners access to text books so that learners get familiar with diagrams.
- make sure teachers offer more exercises to candidates so that they know how to approach questions during examinations especially essay questions.
- provide access to chief examiners reports to teachers.
- conduct in-service training to expose teachers to ways of handling difficult topics.

(ii) Ministry of Education

The Ministry should

- recruit more Geography teachers so that the subject is taught properly
- ensure that relevant teaching materials such as recommended textbooks and syllabus are provided equally among all subject disciplines and schools.
- should intensify monitoring learning processes across schools so that standards are maintained.
- organise in-service training for Geography teachers as is the case with sciences.